

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

S E C R E T STATE 003604

FOLLOWING SENT AMEMBASSY BANGKOK FROM SECSTATE WASHDC
08 JAN 75:

QUOTE S E C R E T STATE 003604

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH

SUBJECT: FUTURE US FORCE LEVELS IN THAILAND

REFS: (A) BANGKOK 20195; (B) STATE 259379

1. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THE PRESSURES ON THE RTG TO GIVE SOME PUBLIC INDICATION THAT CONSULTATIONS ON U.S. FORCE REDEPLOYMENTS HAVE NOT STALLED, WE ARE NOT YET IN A POSITION TO TELL THE THAI PRECISELY WHAT WE HOPE TO DO IN THE COMING MONTHS. MOREOVER, WE QUESTION THE ADVISABILITY OF TRYING TO NAIL DOWN AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PRESENT LAME-DUCK GOVERNMENT. IF CHAROEN'S THEORY THAT THE U.S. PRESENCE IN THAILAND WILL BE A CENTRAL ISSUE WITH THE NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS CORRECT, WE WOULD THINK THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT WILL WANT TO MAKE ITS OWN ARRANGEMENTS WITH US AND WILL NOT REGARD ITSELF AS BOUND BY AN AGREEMENT WORKED

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OUT AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR BY ITS PREDECESSOR. WHATEVER THE

REASONS FOR THE THAI MILITARY'S GROWING SENTIMENT AGAINST FURTHER REDUCTIONS MAY BE, WE PRESUME THEY WILL STILL BE VALID AFTER JANUARY 26 AND POTENTIALLY CAN BE USED BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO MODERATE POSSIBLE DEMANDS FROM THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR MORE ACCELERATED WITHDRAWALS THAN WE WOULD PREFER. WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR CAREFUL JUDGMENT ON THESE VIEWS.

2. MOREOVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A GOOD TIME

FOR FURTHER PUBLICIZED U.S.-THAI MEETING REGARDING AMERICAN FORCES REDUCTIONS. IT WOULD SEND THE WRONG SIGNALS TO HANOI AND TO ALL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR US TO PROCEED WITH SUCH A BUSINESS-AS-USUAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CURRENT NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE IN INDOCHINA. WE WOULD PREFER TO HAVE YOU INFORM THE RTG THROUGH WHAT YOU REGARD AS AN APPROPRIATE CHANNEL THAT WE WANT TO HOLD OUR FORCE LEVELS STEADY OVER THE DRY SEASON UNTIL WE SEE HOW THE NVA OFFENSIVE HAS DEVELOPED. YOU SHOULD TELL THE RTG THAT WE BELIEVE FURTHER WITHDRAWALS NOW WOULD ONLY ENCOURAGE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TO EXPAND THEIR ATTACKS. THIS WOULD NOT SERVE EITHER THAI OR AMERICAN INTERESTS. FOR THE SAME REASON, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO HOLD EVEN A REVIEW MEETING.

3. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO YOUR COMMENTS ON U.S. FORCE LEVELS IN THAILAND. THE CURRENT AUTHORIZATIONS TOTAL APPROXIMATELY 27,000 PERSONNEL (26,667) AND THIS IS THE FIGURE WHICH WE WOULD PREFER TO USE FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION. ACTUAL STRENGTHS VARY DAILY DUE TO PERSONNEL WHO ARE TDY OR ARE ON LEAVE OUT OF THE COUNTRY. IN ADDITION, THE ATTRITION OF PCE PERSONNEL WHO ARE NOT TO BE REPLACED (HEADQUARTERS, SUPPORT AND 650 SAC PERSONNEL) HAS REDUCED THE ACTUAL STRENGTH FIGURES. THE SAC REDUCTIONS WERE APPROVED BY GEN KRIANGSAK, AND IT WAS ALSO AGREED TO SPACE THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OVER SOME TIME IN THE EVENT OUR PRESENCE WERE TO BECOME AN ISSUE DURING THE CURRENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IF SUCH A NEED DOES NOT ARISE, WE CAN INCLUDE THE U REDUCTIONS IN AN ANNOUNCEMENT SUBSEQUENT TO AGREE-

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MENT ON A NEW WITHDRAWAL PACKAGE. THEREFORE, WE SUGGEST THAT FUTURE DISCUSSIONS CITE THE NEGOTIATED CEILINGS AND NOT THE ACTUAL STRENGTHS OF U.S. UNITS. KISSINGER UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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